

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Monitoring the Implementation of Property Master Plans

Property: Southwest Wisconsin Grassland and Stream Conservation Area

Master Plan Year: 2010/ Current Report Year 2014. Revised 3/25/2015

Goal 1: Protect, restore and manage priority natural communities and associated rare and declining species

1.1: Establish outreach and assistance programs

<p>MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Together with cooperating partners provide direct one-to-one technical assistance to area landowners. ▪ Create a series of brochures and education displays that provide information about the history and importance of grassland, savanna and stream ecosystems in SW Wisconsin. ▪ Share recommended conservation actions and priorities from Wisconsin's Wildlife Action Plan with other departments, agencies and organizations. ▪ Work with local groups to establish a "Cooperative Weed Management Area".
<p>Accomplishments 2014</p>	<p>GRAZER-BROKER: A portion of the SWGSCA Core Partners (USFWS, TNC, WDNR) set working with the agriculture community as a high priority area for the SWGSCA Coordinator to grow common ground. Per direction from the Core Partners, the coordinator approached the SWGSCA Private Lands Habitat Working Team and asked them to address this area of need. A SWGSCA Grazing Working Group was formed. The SWGSCA coordinator recruited a DATCP representative to be on this team. The Team, who then recruited the DATCP grazing Specialist. This team then cooperated to hire a grazer broker who connects landowners who want to earn income through grazing with grazers who need more land to graze. This was a three year initiative by the team. The Team was invited to join the Pasture Network which helped facilitate funding and idea sharing at a regional level. The grazer broker started early in 2014 with SW Badger RC & D agreeing to be the holder of the grant. The intent was to have the entire SWGSCA Partnership facilitate landowner contacts with the grazer broker. The Grazing Working Team and the Grazer Broker held 3 landowner and grazer workshops which culminate with a "speed-dating" workshop where contracts are initiated between the two groups. Numerous brochures, displays and outreach material has been developed to support this effort. It should be noted that the formation of the grazing team then led to the formation of</p>

	<p>an intra-agency grazing team within the WDNR WM program.</p> <p>Several “Pasture Walks” were held for private landowners by the Grazer Broker and many more were held by the UW Iowa County Extension Specialist (along with workshops).</p> <p>A Whole Farms Demonstration Days was held for private landowner by the Grazer Broker.</p> <p>Blue Mounds Area Group (BMAP) continued to host its Winter Speaker Series and provided speakers on four occasions for the public and its members to attend. This also serves as a recruitment effort with people that joining BMAP then being invited to summer volunteer work parties on member lands. This is an extremely creative grass roots endeavor that has built good will between conservationists and landowners.</p> <p>DRIFTLESS Area Land Trust (DALC) beefed up effort in outreach on a variety of fronts including children’s programs and providing speakers such as a retired UW entomologist to talk to members and the public. They also held several field trips showcasing their work on private lands.</p> <p>UW Extension and DALC the annual general Landowner workshop targeting SWGSCA landowners.</p> <p>UW Extension held its annual YOUTH CONSERVATION DAYS. Iowa County Middle schools are invited. SWGSCA conservation partners are asked to show up and man booths located within conservation grassland to teach hand-on conservation programs to the children.</p> <p>TNC continued to hold a variety of field trips on their lands in the MRPHA.</p> <p>The Prairie Enthusiasts (TPE) hosted UW STATEWIDE SCIENCE DAYS field trips and workshops and provided conservation speakers and Displays.</p> <p>The Prairie Enthusiasts hosted it annual REGIONAL PRAIRIE DAYS field trips and workshops and provided conservation speakers and displays.</p> <p>TNC and the Farm Bill Biologist began to plan to have a private lands prescribed burn cooperative models after similar groups out west.</p> <p>SW Badger RC&D initiated a weed management conservation area to facilitate uplands in addition to its current aquatic weed specialist staff position and program.</p> <p>WDNR WM SWGSCA Staff hosted a Strategic Planning Field Trip to Davis for the WDNR WM Bureau Director and the WDNR WM Property Specialist.</p> <p>WDNR WM SWGSCA Staff hosted a training field trip to the new WDNR WM Biologists.</p> <p>The public was offered an opportunity to attend grassland bird ID workshop in conjunction with the last year</p>
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	of the WDNR UW Madison BCA/Bird/Habitat Study (Guttery/Sample/Ribic).
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1.2: Acquire, restore, and manage large permanent grassland areas and remnant habitat areas

MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inventory, protect and manage key lands to permanently protect and buffer managed grasslands in and surrounding BCA cores, as well as remnant prairies, oak savanna (oak openings), some high-quality oak woodlands, and priority streams that are of particularly high quality, support rare species, or contribute to permanent managed grassland areas. ▪ Establish a coarse-grain habitat monitoring program that will include analyzing land-cover changes by tracking changes in habitat acreages using databases such as the EPA's National Land Cover Database and the NRCS's Natural Resources Inventory). ▪ Use computerized mapping in conjunction with field cover-mapping to track progress of protection over time in BCA cores as well as in small sites such as high quality prairies, savannas, and stream reaches.
Accomplishments 2014	<p>Three WDNR WM Habitat Areas were acquired between when the SWGSCA has moved from its planning and into its implementation phase (2011-2013). In 2014 management of these properties included posting all boundaries, planning and establishing parking lots, removal of a wooded fence line on the Shervin Property. The Davis property had several remedial and reclamation activities accomplished in 2014: removal of a barn, reroute electricity and remove power line, well-sealed, The grazer improved fencing and lay gravel on 1 miles work the road that interacts the property. The grazer-broker came out to Davis and offered insight into how we could better implement conservation grazing in the future. A grazing awareness sign was created and posted at Davis. A burn plan for Shervin was developed, submitted and approved. Gravel pit reclamation completed at Shervin. Alliant Energy met WDNR staff at Davis to plan for electric pole removal in 2015.</p> <p>TNC acquired 2 new parcels near the Barneveld Prairie near the Botham Vineyard. TNC continues to</p>

	<p>manage star conservation properties in SWGSCA.</p> <p>TNC continues to manage star conservation properties in SWGSCA.</p> <p>DALC closed 5 conservation easements totaling 595 acres.</p>
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1.3: Protect rare and declining species, including native plants, fish, grassland birds, mammals, prairie-dependent vertebrates and others

<p>MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Permanently protect, buffer, manage and restore the native communities and habitats that support those species. ▪ Identify additional locations in the project boundary supporting rare species, including those that historically supported rare species but have not been sampled in recent years. ▪ Develop a comprehensive long-term monitoring program for populations of target species that will allow the Department to evaluate progress toward protecting our priority natural communities and the species that depend on them. ▪ Provide information to landowners highlighting specific management actions that would benefit rare species found on or near their land. ▪ Consider restoring populations of rare species to locations where they were historically pre-sent and where habitat improvements indicate their likely long-term survival
<p>Accomplishments 2014</p>	<p>The third year of the Grassland Landscape Scale Bird Conservation/Habitat study was completed by WDNR Science Services and UW Madison. This was paired with an opportunity for SWGSCA partners and the public to attend bird ID workshops and help with the Survey.</p> <p>Regal Surveys were done at Davis and Shervin SWGSCA habitat Areas. .</p> <p>Prairie Remnant Survey planned by WDNR SS at Davis.</p> <p>Planning continued for a UW conservation grazing study to be done at several sites throughout Wisconsin and Davis moved into the top tier as a potential site.</p> <p>The DATCP Grazing Specialist and the Lafayette County Grazing Specialist visited the WDNR WM Davis Habitat Area and provided guidance as to how to better protect the stream.</p> <p>A prairie remnant location survey and subsequent mapping was done at the WDNR WM Gnewuch Habitat Area.</p>

1.4: Protect watersheds of warm-water and cold-water streams that have been designated as Outstanding or Exceptional Resource Waters and restore, protect and manage degraded (“Impaired”) streams and ri-parian corridors

<i>MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Sample warm-water streams that have not been sampled in recent years to identify locations supporting rare aquatic species, including fish, reptiles and amphibians.▪ Establish or maintain existing long-term grass cover of 20 percent or more within priority watersheds.▪ Update stream designations and the state’s list of impaired waters by identifying waters not meeting their designated biological use.▪ Once conditions in the watersheds of priority warm-water streams have improved to the point that water quality concerns have been addressed, consider projects to restore stream channel morphology in degraded reaches of priority streams.▪ Monitor stream response (e.g., water quality, channel morphology, stream Index of Biotic Integrity, fish sampling) to protection and management activities.
<i>Accomplishments 2014</i>	See WDNR Water Program And TNC, etc. for updates on watershed work within SWGSCA.

Goal 2: Develop and enhance compatible recreational opportunities such as hunting, bird-watching, trout and bass fishing, trapping, nature study, paddling, hiking, and appreciation of the area's cultural history.

<p><i>MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide compatible recreational opportunities in the project area on lands acquired in fee, or work to secure public access on lands that are protected by easement. ▪ Enhance recreational experiences by developing educational materials that highlight stream and grassland-related points of interest on or near Department properties. ▪ Continue work through the Streambank Protection Program to increase public access to high quality fishing areas, particularly streams supporting brook trout and smallmouth bass. ▪ Work with Wisconsin Department of Transportation and utility companies to enhance recreational opportunities and minimize negative aesthetic impacts of roadway and power line corridors within the project area. ▪ Promote the Southwest Savanna Great Wisconsin Birding and Nature Trail in southwest Wisconsin, highlighting some of the many great birding opportunities in the project area. ▪ Monitor user-ship patterns on public lands as funding allows, using tools such as onsite surveys, consultation with local units of government, and coordination with the Department of Tourism and other local recreation and sporting groups
<p><i>Accomplishments 2014</i></p>	<p>WDNR WM SWGSCA provided hunting for the first time on three new properties.</p>

Goal 3: Help sustain the area's rural agricultural landscape.

<p>MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Department and contributing Partners will provide staff to assist farmers and help them enroll in USDA programs that provide financial and technical assistance, such as CSP, and GRP. ▪ Protect and manage lands in a manner that is compatible with surrounding agriculture. ▪ Help reduce the land investments for some farmers interested in selling or easing valuable conservation lands, while continuing to farm remaining higher production lands. ▪ Provide input to USDA, DATCP, and our state and national legislators about conservation implications of proposed changes in farm policies and programs, and to recommend actions that would benefit both conservation and local producers. ▪ In some cases use land management tools, including management agreements or cropland rental, to continue project-compatible agricultural uses on Department owned land. ▪ Work with DATCP to create brochures and other educational materials and displays highlighting the history of farming in southwest Wisconsin, and the importance of maintaining grass-based agriculture to provide habitat for fish and wildlife. ▪ Promote the establishment of a Working Lands Initiative project in this project area. ▪ Encourage efforts on the part of producers to market agricultural products that are produced in a way that is compatible with grassland conservation. ▪ Monitor agricultural trends over time so project goals and strategies are adjusted to accommodate changing land use practices.
<p>Accomplishments 2014</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ WDNR provides funding to NRCS for the Farm Bill Biologist program (NRCS and Pheasants Forever also contribute). The assigned FBB's then to assist farmers and help them enroll in USDA programs that provide financial and technical assistance, such as CS, and GRP. The FBB helps protect and manage lands in a manner that is compatible with surrounding agriculture. When asked, the Department and contributing Partners will provide staff to assist farmers and help them enroll in USDA programs that provide financial and technical assistance, such as CSP, and GRP. The program is so technical that often the FBB prefers to receive partner help via media outreach efforts and working with the SWGSCA partners to put on various landowner workshops. ▪ DALC and TPE help reduce the land investments for some farmers interested in selling or easing valuable conservation lands, while continuing to farm remaining higher production lands. ▪ USFWS, TNC, TPE, WDNR SS provide input to USDA, DATCP, and our state and national legislators via the Statewide Wildlife technical Committee about conservation implications of proposed changes in farm policies and programs, and to recommend actions that would benefit both conservation and local producers. Witness to this is the approved Driftless Initiative.

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ In appropriate situations WDNR uses land management tools, including management agreements or cropland rental, to continue project-compatible agricultural uses on Department owned land. Currently WDNR is using grazing as a tool via a grazing contract on the SWGSCA Davis Habitat Area.▪ The SW Badger RC& D (SWGSCA) Grazing Broker working with DATCP and NRCS to create brochures and other educational materials and displays highlighting the history of farming in southwest Wisconsin, and the importance of maintaining grass-based agriculture to provide habitat for fish and wildlife is being promoted and increased.▪ Promote the establishment of a Working Lands Initiative project in this project area has not been approved by local communities at this point.▪ Grazing broker supported by SWGSCA partnership is encourage efforts on the part of producers to market agricultural products that are produced in a way that is compatible with grassland conservation.▪ The WDNR SS is monitor agricultural trends over time so project goals and strategies are adjusted to accommodate changing land use practice via the Bird/Habitat/BCA study.▪ TNC continues to use grazing as a management tool their lands and has hosted demonstration Outreach field trips and provided a conservation grazing kiosk. |
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Goal 4: Work with local communities to help design and locate development in places that minimize impacts on grassland, savanna and stream ecosystems, while promoting a healthy rural economy.

<i>MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work to incorporate consideration of natural resource conservation into local planning and decision-making processes. ▪ Provide local communities with technical information on key natural resources within their planning jurisdiction, and become involved in comprehensive planning wherever possible. ▪ Encourage and support local communities in their efforts to survey and assess key resources in areas that are the subject of current or future land-use planning. ▪ Assist with local efforts to promote grassland-based tourism in the project area.
<i>Accomplishments 2014</i>	WDNR Water Program has several Adaptive Management projects in the planning stages in SWGSCA.

Goal 5: Promote appreciation of historical, cultural, and archaeological resources.

<i>MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ When protection is warranted based on natural resources present, work to enrich the inherent value and public benefits of land protection where there is opportunity to encompass archaeological, cultural and historical features either on the site, or within its viewshed. ▪ Obtain information from the State Historical Society on the locations of such historic and archaeological features and consider these data in land protection planning efforts ▪ Work with state and local historical societies and local governments to create outreach materials describing important cultural, historical, and archaeological sites visible from Department properties.
<i>Accomplishments 2014</i>	Continued to provide the SWGSCA Oral History Book to folks by directing them to library holdings or to website links.